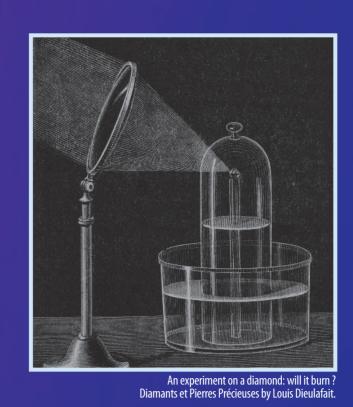


Diamond, diamond, burning bright...

Surprise, surprise! - The first experiments on the invincible stone in the 17th century showed that it burns. How can this be? Well, diamonds are made of carbon, like graphite. Perhaps they are twins?



But this stone evaporates!

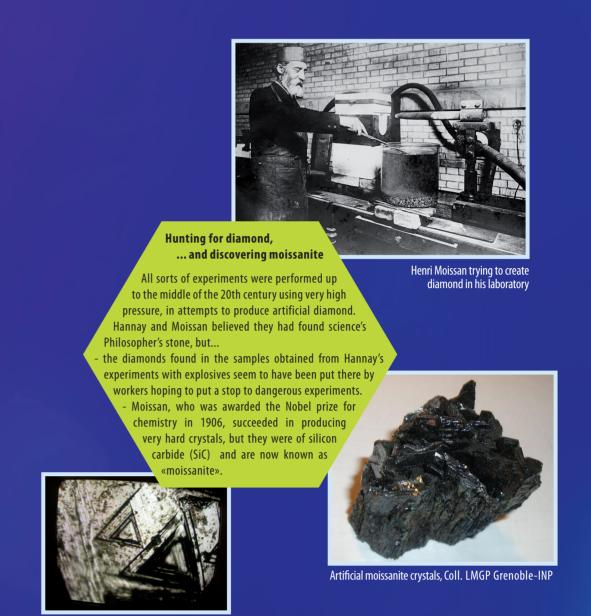
In the 1st century AD, Pliny the Elder wrote that diamonds resist fire and will not even heat up in the hottest of flames (as they transmit the heat) It was therefore against all expectations that Boyle, the Irish natural philosopher, discovered, without understanding why, that diamonds «evaporate» when subjected to great heat. More and more experiments were carried out up to the 19th century, by Darcet, Lavoisier and then later by Friedel, to try to understand the transformation.

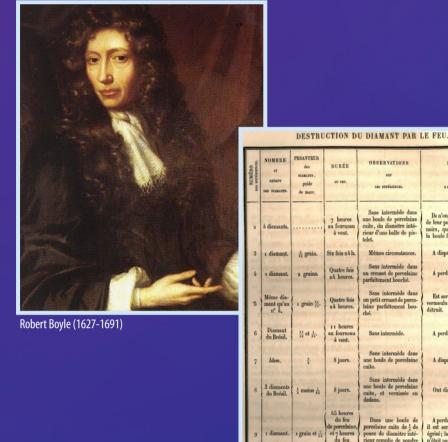
Identical twins, but very different in character

Scholars knew in the 19th century that diamond and graphite are both made of carbon But they were unable to explain the difference. One is hard and transparent; the other black and crumbly. Diamond is heavier than graphite. This suggested at that time that if you compress graphite into the volume occupied by a diamond of the same weight, the graphite would be transformed into diamond!

Or are they false twins?

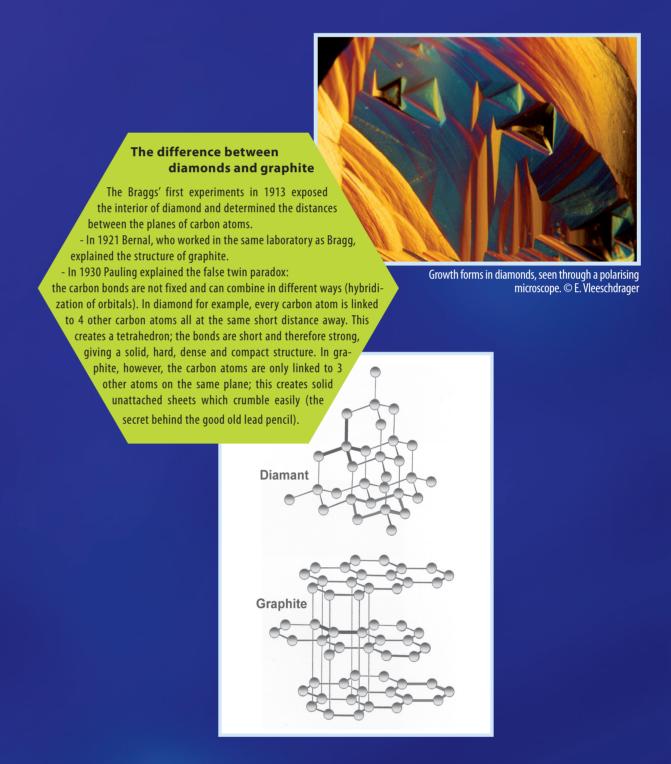
At the beginning of the 20th century X-rays showed scientists the internal structure of both diamond and graphite; they are both very different.





Lavoisier's «Mémoire» on the destruction of diamond by fire, in the Comptes rendus de l'Académie des sciences (1772) by Louis Dieulafait.

A perdu 3 de son poids.



Charles and Georges Friedel. © Néel-CNRS.

